



MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS

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SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
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Testimony of Glenn Marx, Executive Director, Montana Association of Land Trusts

Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee January 8, 2007 -- SB 131 (Cobb) Land Banking Extension

My name is Glenn Marx, and I am the executive director of the Montana Association of Land Trusts, or MALT. MALT is an association of 11 nonprofit land trusts whose focus is private land conservation.

Montana's land trusts strongly support the concept of land banking, and commend the Montana Board of Land Commissioners, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Senator John Cobb for seeking an extension of the land banking program.

Land banking is still in its infancy in Montana, and while the program may not have been an instant success, the concept certainly shows promise and deserves an extension. The program has been in existence only three years, in the past year has met with some impressive success, and may be on the cusp of even more impressive successes. The rate of income return on the land banking projects completed thus far is stunning, and the public values protected or improved is equally as stunning.

The land banking program Montana now has in place...together with the two minor amendments incorporated in SB 131...has several safeguards in place to ensure the state's fiscal interests and the public's interests are protected and enhanced. Simply put, land banking passes all the tests for sound school trust lands management. Land banking allows greater return to the school trust, creates greater options and greater opportunities for state land managers, protects important Montana values, and more importantly makes basic common sense from an overall private/public land management mix.

On behalf of the Montana Association of Land Trusts, I would like to thank you for allowing us to testify today in support of passage of SB 131.